Creating a Culture of Belonging

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Bet on the Future

Catholic social teaching is based on the idea that every human being is created in the image of God and redeemed by Jesus Christ, and therefore is invaluable and worthy of respect as a member of the human family. The Church, and, subsequently, educational programs have the God-given mission and the unique capacity to call people to live with integrity, compassion, responsibility, and concern for others.

*United States Conference of Catholic Bishops [USCCB], 1998, para. 5)*

Many, King and Kiely, *Journal of Catholic education*, Vol. 21, Issue 1

In the words of Jorge Mario Bergolio: “To educate means to bet on the future.”

Pope Francis sees our schools as “an important means of social and national integration, one of the principal pillars for the construction of the sense of community.”

Francis: “Let us combat, in our schools, every form of discrimination and prejudice...In this way, we will begin to put up a very clear sign—even controversial and confrontational, if necessary—of the diverse society that we want to create.”
More than tolerance, more than acceptance, more even than inclusion

BELONGING

Children, teachers and families

Purposeful interactions tell the story - convey the message

Hiring

Professional Development
Purposeful Communication

No casual conversations!

How do you communicate welcome and openness?

Environment
How does a school leader create a culture of compassion?

By being what you want people to be.

By selecting your staff wisely

By being future oriented, emphasizing potential, and broadcasting the vision

By being positive, grateful and idealistic

By holding hope for teachers, children and parents

By using the collective, “We are.” and “We will.”

By making your vision visible with concrete signs, data and symbolism.
What do we believe?

About Catholic Education?

About what we are called to do?

How do we make that work in the real world?
The Process Conveys the Message

From first contact - testing and documents vs. face-to-face conversation

Placement options and creative solutions

Commit to doing what it takes and then say, “Welcome”

When you cannot meet a child’s needs - are you sure?

We accept families
What Gets in the Way?

Attitudes

Fixers

Fears - parents’ fears, teachers’ fears, administrators’ fears
Collaboration and Problem Solving

Student Assistance Team Meetings

Strengths and Strategies Profiles

Administrative presence

Unwavering belief that we will find a way

Permission to be creative

Communications
Who should be included in the conversation?

OT’S, PT’S, Speech Therapist, County or District providers, private providers

Who knows them better?

Be honest and open from the start

Ask parents for help

Set goals with parents
What does Inclusion Look Like in a Catholic School?

ACADEMIC

What does the space look like?

What are classroom teachers doing?

What are Special Educators doing?

What are teaching assistants (paraeducators) doing?
Instruction

How can I teach so that my instruction is received by all the children in my class (visual and oral, where are the children?)?

How can all children engage with the material (cutting out words, iPads, manipulatives)?

What am I assessing? (means or material)
In the hallways, on the playground and beyond

Social Inclusion

Social Pragmatics

“Baby” syndrome

Field Trips, Overnights, Birthday Parties

“This is who we are.”
What do they want from us?

Parents want:

Communication

Value their perspective

Acknowledge and respect their concerns

Know and love their children
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“Ask God what He wants of you, and be brave!”

Pope Francis